butterfly

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by multifandom_fanfic_writer

Summary

A butterfly flaps its wings. Will Graham does not survive his stay at the Baltimore State Hospital for the Criminally Insane.

Hannibal Lecter… does not handle this well.

Notes

Warnings for suicide, graphic violence, self harm, and just a lot of violence. Oh, and cannibalism, but that's par for the course in this house.

All those who are looking for Hannibal losing his shit and killing everyone, I present to you:

- Translation into Русский available: Бабочка by SnakeCorps

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A butterfly flaps its wings.

The little insect veers of to the left, instead of the right. Because of this, it tumbles into the view of Chester.

Chester, a perfectly happy and perfectly normal dog, does what perfectly happy and perfectly normal dogs tend do to and barks excitedly. The little Russel Terrier jumps forward in interest, eyes tracking the fascinating little insect.

Ellie – phone in one hand, leash and car keys in the other – pays attention to her phone instead of her dog, and is pulled along harshly. She stumbles and falls, shouting at Chester to calm down.

As Ellie falls, the car keys slip through her fingers. They fall down the gutter, into the sewers and out of reach. The teen grumbles. It's almost nine, and she can't *walk* home! Or leave the car here!

Ellie Isley calls her father to pick her up.

Sheldon Isley does so reluctantly, because he tries to be a good father. He does not always succeed. Sighing, senator Isley gets in his car and drives away.

Hannibal Lecter watches him go with a frown and thinks.

A few days should not make a difference to his dear mongoose. Will has been spiralling beautifully, getting increasingly more frustrated as Jack refuses to open his eyes. His transformation is so close. After he kills senator Isley, Will shall surely be exonerated and set free. Back into Hannibal's waiting arms.

He cannot wait.

Whistling softly, the Chesapeake Ripper continues his walk, enjoying the evening breeze.

Chilton's office is as boring and pompous as the man himself. Sometimes, Hannibal thinks to himself as he eyes the atrocious chairs he, Alana and Jack are sitting on, sacrifices have to be made.

"Even if Will Graham is innocent of these murders," Chilton says with a childish pout, "as his therapist, I must say that he is certainly not well. He needs help. Help that only *I* can give him, that the BSHCI can give him. We are making good progress," a lie, of course, "and I don't think halting that progress is good for him. Are you sure–"

"This is imprisonment, not therapy," Alana cuts in with a dangerous glare in her eyes. "We're going downstairs *now* and we're taking Will with us."

Hannibal appreciates Alana's ferociousness. "Rest assured," he adds, "if Will is amendable to it, I am open to continuing our conversations." Hannibal allows himself a private smile. "I want nothing but the best for Will."

"You don't have to," Alana says softly as she lays a hand on his arm. Hannibal fakes a fond look even as he suppresses his impatience. Alana's perception of him as vulnerable is too useful to break over a few overly concerned comments.

"This is a court order," Jack says brusquely as he slaps the paper on Chilton's desk. "Not a question. Lead the way, Dr. Chilton."

Chilton obeys, shoulders drooping. Hannibal fights the urge to draw the scalpel carefully tucked away in his suit jacket to slit the man's throat and be done with it. Hopefully the incompetent doctor hadn't damaged Will's psyche *too* much.

That right belongs to him and him alone.

Following languidly as they make their way though the Baltimore Hospital for the Criminally Insane, Hannibal feels himself come to life. Every time he walks these hallways, towards the one man who will become either his downfall or his salvation, he feels the seams of his person suit throb.

The last time Hannibal had visited Will the profiler had looked at him so hopelessly Hannibal had been tempted to free him right there and then. Will was holding on to the last edges of his sanity. There was no one on his side since Ms. Katz unfortunate demise – and the less unfortunate end of Mr. Brown.

No one to believe in him. No one to *see* him. No strings to tether him to this world.

Soon, Will would be free, and he would be unable to resist coming back to Hannibal. Where he belongs. And Hannibal will welcome him. Maybe he'll even take him to Abigail. Hannibal has considered holding on to his little surprise until Will had more time to emerge from the chrysalis. But thanks to senator Isley, his mongoose has become more unravelled than originally planned. With election season coming up, it had taken Hannibal weeks rather than days to find another opportunity to dispose of the pig with the name of Sheldon Isley.

Maybe it had been a stroke of good luck. Will would be free, now; free of the chains Jack had thrust so cruelly upon him, free to walk back into Hannibal's arms.

Hannibal is drawn out of his inner reflections by the sound of footsteps running toward their little group.

"Doctor Chilton! Doctor," a heaving breath as an unfamiliar orderly turns the corner, red-faced and sweaty, "Chilton." The man comes to a stop. He swallows and fidgets in unease, tinged with guilt.

Hannibal tilts his head with curiosity.

"Will Graham is dead," the orderly says and Hannibal's world shatters.

The outraged gasps of Alana and Jack barely register, nor does Chilton's squealing. The only thing going though Hannibal's mind is *no*.

The world turns red. Hannibal starts running, through the open door and pushing into the familiar hallway, frantic. He is vaguely aware of pushing through Jack and Alana but he does. not. care. a. single. iota.

The door of Will's cell is open. An orderly stands in front of it, ashen-faced and open-mouthed, looking up slowly as Hannibal barrels into him and pushes into the cell.

Will is still breathing.

The rise and fall of the only other chess player in the world is slow, so slow, and Hannibal does not hesitate. He falls to his knees as footsteps catch up behind him, pressing his hands to the cut on Will's throat.

It is almost an exact mirror of Abigail's wound all those months ago – but deeper.

Hannibal's eyes flicker over the broken pen in Will's prone hand, the pale clammer of his face, the spasming of Will's eyes. *He has only a few minutes left to live*, the surgeon within him diagnoses coldly. Hannibal discards that fact with the same ease he has discarded society's morals.

"Will," he whispers, "Will, Will, Will, *Will*, *Will*."

Behind him Hannibal hears Alana's shocked and broken gasp. The absence of sound from Jack side is even more damning. The orderly steps back, grim and uncomfortable, and disappears from view.

Hannibal does not care. His attention is on the blueish grey of Will's eyes as they slowly flutter open.

Will's mouth is full of blood, his words soft and halting. "O-of course it's you," the profiler whispers, defeated. Hannibal has never heard him so devoid of emotion, of will to live, and his heart lurches.

"I'm here, Will," he says and to his mortification Hannibal hears his voice break. "I have never left."

"Left me…" Will manages. "Alone. All a lie." A gurgle, another rivet of blood. "Never–," he gasps, "never cared. Me. Abigail."

Hannibal blinks, and only then realizes his eyes are starting to water. "I've always cared. Abigail is alive," he confesses without a second thought, uncaring of whomever is listening. "There is a place for her in your world. Our world."

Will laughs bitterly, or tries to. "Why…" More blood. "…believe?"

"*Will*," Hannibal chokes, chest constricting with every beat of Will's struggling heart. "Don't leave me." Hannibal surprises himself with his own words. The desperation in them. But the

words ring true. The feeling in his chest, burning, aching–

“Liar.”

Hannibal doesn’t blink, only shakes his head, once. “No. Not now. I love you, Will. I’m sorry.” But he can see Will’s eyes, and he can see Will doesn’t believe him.

(Hannibal has never been more truthful in his entire life.)

“*Liar*…” Will spats at him with his last reserves.

Hannibal shakes his head. The world blurs. His fingers tremble, and Will’s skin is cold, so cold. “I love you,” he repeats firmly, putting all of his conviction in the words as his person suit *burns*, flaking away, baring the raw and wounded animal underneath. “I promise. Let me show you. Just don’t–” His throat closes up briefly. “*Don’t leave me.*”

And Hannibal begs, Hannibal never begs, but now he begs and he begs and he begs.

“Please," he says. "I love you,” he says again and this time, Will *looks* at him.

His gaze widens. The pieces click–

One last shuddering breath, and Will Graham is no more.

“Don’t leave me.” Hannibal’s mouth is still moving. “Don’t leave me *don’t leave me don’t*-”

The Chesapeake Ripper breaks down. His sobs are silent, ugly things. Hannibal feels his shoulders shake and his mind start up the mantra again. *No, no, no, no, no, no–*

A hand on his shoulder.

“Hannibal,” Alana says, tears falling down her face, her voice thick with pain and sympathy.

The five stages of grief are well-documented phenomenon. Hannibal has guided many a patient through them, often with a subtle emphasis on *anger*. He’s always held the opinion that it is the most useful emotion. The first and only time in his life he’d experienced grief, Hannibal knew that to be the truth. Now that he experiences grief for the second time, years after the cold and hard winters of Lithuania, it still holds true.

Alana touches him. Hannibal feels himself jump from denial to a cold, hard *rage*.

He’s not sure there will ever be room for anything else.

The decision is easily made. Abruptly, Hannibal stands, hands slippery with Will’s blood. His mind is set, his movements swift and silent. Alana looks at him, beautiful in her devastation. Jack stares at Will’s body numbly, not aware of the world around him. In shock.

Convenient.

Hannibal breaks Alana's neck within a second. The woman never realizes what is happening even as she leaves this world, painless and quick.

She's earned it.

Alana's body hits the ground. Jack frowns as if drugged, his instincts screaming at him but his mind not able to process the warnings. Hannibal is quick, quicker than he's ever been in his life. He grabs the broken pen next to Will. He pulls Jack's gun out of its holster and throws it to the back of the cell. He presses the head of the BAU against the wall. Only then Jack starts to struggle.

Too little, too late.

"Hannibal," Jack says, barely audible as Hannibal lays his hands to Jack's neck and presses, hard, slowly crushing his windpipe. "What– How– *Why*..." The betrayed shout is weak for lack of air.

"For all the times you abused Will," Hannibal growls. "All those times you treated him like trash. You, nothing more than a pig, daring to act like you hold any authority over him. I should have killed you *months* ago."

Maybe then Will would still be alive.

Slashing Jack's neck open with the broken pen is not easy, but Hannibal cannot settle for anything else. He presses the broken plastic against the tender skin of Jacks throat and moves his hand once, then twice to deepen the wound.

Jack chokes and gurgles, mimicking Will. This sounds are like a prayer, a rightful reckoning.

Atonement.

For you, my love.

"Ripper…" Jack growls desperately as he struggles under Hannibal's grip. Hannibal's heart beats in his ears. His body is on fire, driven by the rightful wrath of a God. Jack, fuelled by adrenaline, manages to claw his nails into Hannibal's arms. The doctor's suit is thick. The bruises barely register.

"Of course it's me," Hannibal says derisively. "Will has never once been wrong about a killer. It is *you* who deserves to burn for staying blind. You brought this upon yourself, *Jack*." The way Jack's eyes consorts in grief and hate is soothing. Hannibal feels like a gaping hole, empty and yearning, sucking up any feeling he can. The feeling of triumph, satisfaction and vindication at Jack's slow death quickly evaporate.

He needs more.

"I'm seeing Bella this afternoon," Hannibal whispers, moving their heads closer, blood dripping down his suit. Jack's eyes fill with a primal sense of terror. "Then Jimmy, then Brian. I'm sure they'd *love* to get to know the *real* me."

Jack struggles vainly. He dies terrified.

It's *righteous*.

When Hannibal steps back and lets Jack's body slump to floor next to Alana's, opposite the wall where Will lays, *don't leave me I'm sorry I can't without you*, the Chesapeake Ripper takes a deep breath.

Miraculously, the debacle has gone unnoticed. The only noise is the deranged screaming in the cell next to Will, whomever it is triggered by the violence, soft as it were.

Good.

Hannibal grabs Jack's gun in one hand and pulls his scalpel from his jacket with the other. Will's blood glisters under the light if the cell, mixed with Jack's undeserving fluids.

Hannibal licks both his hands clean. He will not let a single drop go to waste.

The Ripper in him takes over, even though the monster is screaming with loss as much as the rest of him. Checking the corridor outside, he sees no one there – not even Chilton. The coward must be hoping to delay dealing with this as long as possible.

No matter. Hannibal will make him pay.

With quick, efficient movements Hannibal ties his tie around Will's throat, stopping the last of the blood leaving Will's body. He cleans the liquid from Will's prone form as best as he can. A broken sound emerges from his throat at the sight of the blood already sunk in the stone floor, forever lost to him. He grabs Jack's gun.

There are footsteps in the corridor, come closer. For a single second, the BSHCI is replaced by a cold and barren forest. The footsteps are loud, nearing the thin wooden door. Behind him, Mischa cowers fearfully.

The vision dissipates. Chilton and an orderly stand in front of the cell.

Chilton's eyes widen and he wastes the single second he has to do something to demand, "*What* is going on here."

Hannibal raises the gun and fires twice, hitting the orderly in the chest. He jumps at Chilton immediately after. Chilton's face is deathly pale. Hannibal punches him across the temple *hard*. He goes down easily.

The whole cell row rebels at the gunshot reverberating in the hallway, but Hannibal pays it no mind. Chilton is weak, disoriented. Hannibal grabs Jack's tie, then Chilton's own, and ties both Chilton's hands to the bars.

"I don't understand," Chilton begs pathetically. "Hannibal, what are you doing, stop, *stop*!"

He does not stop. Instead he slices open Chilton's arms with surgical precision, adding many, *many* horizontal strips on each arm.

They are tally marks. One for every time he dared to mess with Will's mind.

Chilton's suffering is going to be drawn-out and painful.

The head of the BSHCI is sobbing uncontrollably, begging Hannibal to *please, have m-mercy, p-p-please,* as if he deserves it. *Pathetic*. Grabbing a hand of dust and gravel from the cell floor, Hannibal rubs it in Chilton's wounds with a vindictive smile. The beast in him roars. It is this man's fault his mate is gone.

But it is not, his mind whispers, *it was yours. You miscalculated. You broke your toy.* You *are to blame*.

Ignoring the thoughts even as his chest aches, Hannibal flips his scalpel and makes a precise incision around Chilton's skull.

"Dear Frederick," he coos cruelly, "I'll let you bleed out as I take care of the rest of your staff. And when I come back, I will rip open your skull and cut up your brain like you tried to do with *my Will*." The last words are almost conversational.

Chilton whimpers.

Hannibal dismisses the snivelling worm and sets out to hunt.

Hannibal makes his way through the BSHCI with a symphony playing in his head. The notes of Mozart's *Requiem* are crystal clear, guiding him on his path. The loss and grief are raging through him, flowing out of him in violence.

None of the orderlies are prepared for an attack from outside the cells. Chilton is a poor boss, the BSHCI understaffed and underprepared. Hannibal is an experienced killer and fuelled by desperation.

His scalpel is sharp. His gun is useful, as is the second gun he picks up from the sole armed guard on duty.

When he is done, his whole suit is stained crimson. Someone managed to hit the alarm and the sirens blare loudly. There is no one but the inmates left to care. The inmates are going crazy, shouting wildly, jumping against their bars. Hannibal ignores them all. Useless pigs.

The BSHCI is remote. Hannibal has about sixteen minutes until the police arrive. Fifteen, to be safe.

He only needs ten.

When Hannibal once again descends into Will's corridor, the only cell he stops at is Abel Gideon's.

Gideon watches him patiently.

“It is an honour to meet you,” Gideon says earnestly. “I have been looking for you inside of my head for so long, I’d almost forgotten you exist outside of me.”

Hannibal cocks his head. Raises his gun, then lowers it. Raises his scalpel – lowers it again.

There is no joy at seeing his would-be pretender behind the bars. No delight in the pain he could cause him. No curiosity what will happen if he sets him free.

Hannibal is numb.

He turns his back without a reaction, stepping into Will’s cell. The blankness of his earlier reaction contrasts sharply with the torrent of emotions he feels upon seeing Will’s body.

Will’s body, that beautiful darkness, the only one–

The blood and meat and bones weigh little when he picks them up, bridal-style. An echo of what could have been. Will’s curls are soft against his skin. His head bobs elegantly as Hannibal walks.

“So the beast does have a heart,” Gideon taunts him as he passes by.

Hannibal cannot refute the statement.

He’d lied to Jack. Hannibal has no intention of going after Bella, or Price, or Zeller. They are not worth it.

There is only one person he wants to see.

Hannibal drives with one hand on the steering wheel, one hand on Will’s rapidly cooling body. He drives fast and risky and does not care. It is a blessing he is not pulled over. For the cops, that is.

The cliffside house looms high and imposing in the distance. As it comes closer, Hannibal feels his hands start to tremble. He scowls at his own body. For all his plans, all his calculations, all the ways he had planned to toy with Will before killing him, he had managed to completely miss something vital.

His own heart.

It had frozen that cursed winter in Lithuania, and Hannibal was convinced it would never thaw. He had been wrong. If only he’d had seen it earlier.

Hannibal carries Will inside like a pilgrimage. Abigail comes to meet him in the living room. A few drops of blood are now decorating the living room rug. The girl pales.

“What happened,” she states more than askes.

“I miscalculated.”

Abigail swallows. “Hannibal.”

Behaviour is taught. Abigail is, above all, a survivor. She has learned to deal with grief her own way.

Hannibal looks her in the eyes. “Will was left alone with his demons too long. He decided to end his own suffering.”

Abigail’s eyes search his face for what feels like hours, but is in reality no more than seconds. Hannibal knows that right now, he’s not hard to read. He feels broken, wrung out and skinned for all to see. His person suit has burned to smithereens, and even if he still had it, he wouldn’t bother to put it on again.

Eventually, Abigail nods. There are tears in her eyes, but she refuses to let them fall. “We must honour him.”

“We will.”

They set to work quicky. Hannibal does not know what else to do. He loves Will, loves him still, and must now deal with it the only way he knows how. Make Will part of himself in truth. Abigail assists, but only superficially. This is Hannibal’s heart, laid out on the table, and he will not dishonour Will by giving him anything less than his complete devotion.

Time is meaningless. The sun goes down, the last rays of light spilling into the kitchen as the last dish is done.

They do not exchange a single word.

At last, the table is set. At Hannibal’s side, tenderloin and cheek and rib and lung and tongue and eyes and brain. In front of Abigail there is only one single dish.

“Hannibal,” she says thickly. Her hands are braced around the most expensive dinner plate of them all.

Will’s heart is still whole.

“I do not deserve that part of him,” Hannibal says hollowly. He feels scraped raw, barely manages to keep the words in English. “You brought him more joy than I ever did. You are worthy.”

Abigail starts to cry.

Hannibal picks up his utensils and eats.

He has imagined this often. When Will leaned back in his chair, exposing the line of his throat, Hannibal had fantasized about his neck spit-roasted in thyme and rosary. When Will licked his lips, he’d imagined his tongue cooked lightly and marinated with Italian spices, to be savoured slowly. When Will closed his eyes at a crime scene, Hannibal thought about falling asleep with one in each hand.

The reality is different.

The only thing he tastes is regret.

Hannibal eats and eats and eats. Abigail watches him evenly, concern and empathy (*her father's daughter*) and understanding warring in her eyes. Hannibal does not stop, cannot stop, even as he feels as if he would burst.

In the end, he cannot eat it all. The liver and half of the leg are too much for his body to bear.

Abigail finishes it for him, determination in the set of her shoulders. At her last bite, Hannibal finally starts to cry.

Even in this he has failed Will.

When they are done, it is dark. The only things left of Will Graham are his bones, his hair, every single piece that is not edible. Hannibal has stored them in a delicately carved chest, one of the few heirlooms he took with him from France.

His body protests as he works, his stomach so full each breath hurts. Hannibal forces himself to ignore it. He bends down, slowly, and picks up the chest. It is heavy, almost too heavy for him to carry. Abigail tries to help him, but Hannibal refuses. This honour will belong to him alone.

“Come,” he says, and Abigail follows.

They stand upon the cliffside, looking at the chest between them.

“Will always loved the sea,” Abigail says.

“Yes,” Hannibal says.

He puts his arm around Abigail and pulls her close. They hold the chest together.

“We will never forget him,” the girl that could have been their daughter says.

“Never,” Hannibal agrees and tips them forward, down into the cold waters below.

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